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ABSTRACT

The belief that structural change providing for the representation of minority parents in urban school districts would improve educational services for their children has led to an emphasis on school-system controlled or affiliated channels for participation. This emphasis, based on assumptions about parent participation in suburban districts, has neglected the findings of suburban school studies that indicate the significance of community organizations in the articulation of educational interests and has diverted attention from the recent dilution of local school board authority. This paper relates the utilization of both institutional and independent community channels for the articulation of parent interests in a New York suburb and the results of some recent events in New York City involving the adoption of bilingual programs for Puerto Rican students. The analysis illustrates some of the structural similarities in both types of districts that inhibit parent participation in school-controlled channels and identifies some of the factors related to effective parent participation. Results indicate that reforms are initiated not by established local community groups but by extra-local interest groups. (Author)

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THE ROLE OF EXTRA-LOCAL INTEREST GROUPS IN SCHOOL POLICY MAKING and IMPLEMENTATION *

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will argue that structural change at the local school district level will not provide adequate mechanisms for the representation of urban or suburban parent interests in the present context of educational decision-making.

The belief that structural change providing for the representation of minority parents in urban school districts would improve educational services for their children has led to an emphasis on school-system controlled or affiliated channels for participation. As the author has pointed out previously (Steinberg, 1973), this emphasis, based on assumptions about parent participation in suburban districts, has neglected the findings of suburban school studies which indicate the significance of community organizations in the articulation of educational interests and has diverted attention from the recent dilution of local school board authority.

To substantiate the author's point of view, this paper will compare the utilization of both institutional and independent community channels for the articulation of parent interests in "Eastport," a New York suburb, and relate the results to some recent events in New York City involving the adoption of bilingual programs for Puerto Rican students. The analysis will illustrate some of the structural similarities in both suburb and urban districts which inhibit parent participation in school controlled channels and identify some of the factors related to effective parent participation.

Results indicate that reforms were initiated not by established local community groups but by extra-local interest groups. These extra-local groups perform at least four vital functions for parent change agents at the local level: 1) information dissemination, 2) moral support, 3) pursuit of actions to effect legislative or policy change often required to enable local adoption and 4) legitimation of the issues.

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BACKGROUND

For most New York City decentralization advocates, this reform was conceived as a means to provide participation of inner city parents in order to achieve representation of their interests in the governance of community school districts. Some anticipated that this participation would lead to responsiveness -- the development of new or innovative practices more effective than those now provided for the inner city child. As implemented in New York City, decentralization is a structural change providing for school boards elected by the community and few innovations have been initiated at this level. (LaNoue & Smith, 1973; Yates, 1973) Because the Decentralization Law did not give inner city parents exclusive control of their schools, or develop procedures to give parents an electoral advantage, there have been calls for legal reforms to achieve these ends.*

To a large extent the expectations for parent control and recent efforts to reform the Decentralization Law are based on stereotypes about parent influence and goal consensus in homogeneous suburbs. (Fantini, 1969; Gittell et al, 1972) The quality of suburban education was attributed to the ability of middle class parents to control local school boards. (See Spivak, 1973, for an analysis of the assumptions underlying decentralization and community control.)

It was the discrepancy between these stereotypes and the realities of educational politics in a New York suburb, "Eastport," that led me to begin an exploratory study of community-school conflicts in 1968. This research site was selected not only because of the "apathy" which then prevailed in relation to educational issues (as opposed to economic issues), but because the community included some of the social characteristics typical of many New York City neighborhoods. Since it is predominantly white and middle class, many outsiders might categorize Eastport as a homogeneous community but, in fact, it is a heterogeneous area including both working and middle class residents. Diversity is based on social class, religious and political ideology and ethnicity. The history of school-community controversies prior to 1968 reflected deep cleavages

* In 1973, for example, the Public Education Association advocated the creation of sub-districts to increase parent representation.

between religious and political groups as well as between the school community and residents who did not use the public schools (about 45% of the 12,000 households comprising the school district). But one of the major reasons for studying Eastport was the ineffectiveness of the established institutional channels for participation in issues related to the school program.

Since the study is unfunded it has necessarily relied on the most accessible data and the voluntary cooperation of numerous informants. Despite the bias based on my status as a parent in the Eastport system, I have pursued the study to challenge the stereotypes underlying decentralization with the hope that the enactment of urban decentralization would eventually provide the basis for a comparative analysis of school politics in urban and suburban communities. There also seemed to be a need for more longitudinal studies of suburban school politics.

The initial focus of the Eastport study, based on Coleman's (1959) framework for the analysis of community conflict, was on the role of established community organizations and the institutional structures for participation (school elections and public meetings). The arousal of parent interest in curriculum or program issues, beginning in 1969, reflected the impact of the New York City decentralization controversy. Ensuing events confirmed the basis for conflict predicted by Coleman: that school administrators would resist "parent involvement in this area for which there are few formal channels for expression." (p. 17)

At the very time that decentralization advocates were talking about the "power" of middle class parents, Eastport parents were without any institutional channel for expressing wishes related to the curriculum or teaching -- a consequence of professional domination and the definition of parent participation in these issues as illegitimate. As a result, there was a leadership vacuum in the community in relation to education; the schools were integrated with a small narrow segment of the organizational structure and few parents knew anything about the school system other than what they could learn from their own child's experience. The socialization of parents had trained

them to focus on child development and the home rather than education or the school system and they were totally unprepared for effective participation when the channels became opened.

Defeat of Eastport's school budget (for the first time) in 1969, brought about not only the opening of the institutional channels for participation but the creation of new ones with the objective of developing a more responsive school system. As one trustee responsible for the innovations put it: "This board is determined to represent the community."

With these changes, the emphasis of the study shifted from community conflict to parent influence in education, seeking answers to two questions: Can parents influence the kind of education that goes on in the classroom and, if so, how is this influence exercised? Or, reformulated in the functional terms suggested by Almond and Coleman (1960, p. 16), how are parent interests articulated and through what structures?

RESULTS

Results of the Eastport study suggest that the traditional institutional arrangements for creating a representative school board do not provide adequate structures to ensure the representation of minority interests in a heterogeneous community nor do established community organizations provide adequate structures for the articulation of diverse interests. The tendency for institutional structures to become closed to opposition through the domination of educational administrators and/or citizens representative of established interests, combined with the tendency for community structures to become dominated by the latter, results in the need for the creation of new structures for the articulation of new or unrepresented interests.

Established community organizations provide the means to mobilize support and/or opposition to school board decisions with broad public appeal (mainly economic issues). However, they were not effective structures for the mobilization of support for specific goals relating to educational services. One reason for this is that in most cases the issue involved only a minority of students.

The primary basis of support for these new interests came not from the network of established community groups but extra-local interest groups. Analysis of the differences between successful and unsuccessful reform efforts suggests that extra-local groups perform at least four vital functions for parent change agents at the local level: 1) information dissemination, 2) moral support, 3) pursuit of actions to effect legislative or policy changes often required to enable adoption at the local level and 4) legitimation of the issues.

The need to create new structures at the local level points up a major distinction between suburban and urban school districts which has profound implications for the future of decentralization in New York City. Eastport, like many other suburbs, lacks on-going independent community based educational interest groups or a tradition of forming new groups to represent such interests. In contrast, New York City, like most other cities, includes a number of civic groups with resources to pursue educational interests. Their ability to pursue citywide or broad based issues at the Central Board and state level has been weakened by decentralization. At the local community level, the school boards created by the Decentralization Law have placed parents whose interests are not represented on the school board or articulated through established community groups in the same structural position as reformers in Eastport.

METHODOLOGY

Representation will here mean, following Pitkin (1967), the capacity for elected representatives to act in the interests of the represented. According to Pitkin, a representative system requires not only free elections, but institutional arrangements for both the "expression of wishes" and response to these wishes (pp. 232-233). Other democratic theorists, however, have stressed the need for non-institutional structures, or independent organizations to ensure the institutionalization of opposition. (Lipset et al, 1959; Kornhauser, 1959) This study includes data on participation in both types of structures.

Data were based on seven years of participation observation of public and private meetings in which parents attempted to influence Eastport educational policy, interviews with school trustees, administrators and parent activists. Information on the New York City issues was obtained through an investigation of bilingual programs sponsored by a voluntary association in New York City.

In Eastport there are two categories of institutional channels for the articulation of parent interests relating to educational issues: traditional and innovative. The former include school board and local school meetings run by administrators and trustees, citizen advisory committees and the PTA (classified as an institutional channel since it includes teachers and principals). These meetings are formal, based on parliamentary procedures and usually routine. Communication is typically a one-way process with no provision for an on-going dialogue between officials and parents. The innovative channels, instituted in 1970, include an Educational Goals Committee, private meetings between school board members and parent delegations, and in 1972, a state sponsored Redesign program which aimed to develop administrative responsiveness at the local school level. In contrast to the traditional channels, the new structures provided relatively informal communication and attempts to encourage small group discussions. With the exception of the private meetings between the board and parent delegations, the agenda in both the traditional and innovative channels is controlled or constrained by the professionals who also selected parent representatives. For the most part, these parents were mothers active in both the PTA and community organizations.

Independent channels for articulation of parent interests include: 1) informal or non-associational interest groups based on friendship or neighborhood cliques, ethnic identity and educational philosophy; 2) established associational interest groups such as taxpayers associations, business groups and fraternal societies; 3) new interest groups, including associational and informally organized types with specific goals. (Almond and Coleman, 1960)

PARTICIPATION AND ISSUES

Variations in the rates (measured by attendance at different types of meetings) and patterns of participation (who participates and in what issues) over time suggest that when the school controlled channels are closed to parent in-put on educational issues (or non-responsive), dissatisfaction with the schools takes the form of economic protests and efforts to change the school board. When school leaders were perceived as responsive to parents participating in the innovative structures, support for the schools increased and the number of participants in the school channels also increased as issues became salient. When the leadership was perceived as non-responsive, participation shifted to independent channels.

The innovative structures signalled a change in participatory norms: recognition of parent involvement and the legitimation of dissent in educational issues. That they did not guarantee responsiveness was indicated by the shifts between participation in the institutional and independent structures.

Eastport reformers have pursued issues based on both universalistic and special interests. Included in the first category are demands for systemwide improvements such as the articulation of programs within and between schools, administrative and teacher accountability or the upgrading of ancillary or supplementary services available to all students. Special interests are those calling for the creation of specific programs to serve the needs of categories of students.9 Programs for black students and children diagnosed as having learning disabilities, for examble, are here included.

Parents involved in these efforts tend to fall into two categories: those who on arrival had educational expectations usually based on membership in extra-local professional groups or identification with extra-local reference groups (mostly teachers, psychologists and other professionals involved in child development) and those whose activism grew out of the school's inability to provide an appropriate educational program for their child.

[redacted]

The most significant development since 1970 has been a shift in the form of parent-initiated reform efforts from non-associational activities -- informal clique delegations with diffuse complaints -- to the formation of organized independent groups with specific goals. All of these goals reflected innovations or reforms generated by extra-local interest groups.

Two Phases of Participation. Parent participation has been divided into two phases which require a description of participation prior to 1968.

Between 1962 and 1967, there was no organized dissent related to the school program. Complaints about school services were confined to private discussions. Public apathy was attributed to the ineffectiveness of the institutional channels, a result of the school board reform movement which fostered professional domination of the educational process and participatory norms which defined only supportive participation as legitimate (Steinberg, 1971). The institutional channels originally designed for the integration of the school system and the community were used only for one-way communication: to inform parents about what the schools were doing. In addition, informal or private meetings between the board and parent delegations were prohibited by school policy based on the rationale that education was a public enterprise so all discussion should be "open." Furthermore, response to "special interests" was considered illegitimate. It was claimed that the educational program was designed to serve the "majority."

The effect was to cut off any means for those elected to represent the community to develop a basis for determining their constituents' interests, making representation in this heterogeneous district virtually impossible. From time to time an isolated parent who had not been socialized to the prevailing norms, would publicly express dissatisfaction with Eastport's educational services. This was quickly squelched by an official or supportive parent who claimed that the schools had to be geared to the "majority." This was usually followed by rumors that the dissatisfied parent was either an educational "nut" or alleged to have a "disturbed" child. Once this process was underway, it was difficult for the parent to mobilize support from any source.

The situation changed in 1969 following the defeat of the school budget which reflected not only resistance to increased spending but awareness of the deterioration in educational services. Professional domination had led not to increased efficiency, but the fragmentation of the school program, in part due to the unplanned adoption of miscellaneous innovations, despite the expansion of the administrative bureaucracy. These were compounded by increased enrollments and the hiring of large numbers of new teachers, many of whom had little or no previous experience. (The enrollment increased by 25% between 1960 and 1967. Currently it consists of about 6,000 students in six schools.)

Protests which erupted in 1968, focused on an administrative redistricting proposal (to relieve overcrowding -- not to promote integration), rising costs and a bond issue. Informal unorganized parent protests against the first issue were based on friendship cliques and residential areas. Protests related to economic issues, on the other hand, represented the activation of non-parents mostly members of the instrumental voluntary associations: business groups and taxpayers groups. (There were, however, indications that parents were involved in this activation.)

Parent complaints about the educational program and the lack of communication between the school and parent community emerged just before the 1969 budget defeat and gathered momentum following that event. The institution of the Educational Goals Committee and willingness of the board to meet with private groups was attributed to the board's need to develop support for the schools in order to pass the budget. The strength of the anti-budget forces required the board to strengthen its ties to parents.

The stated objective of the Educational Goals Committee was to create school board and administrative responsiveness. Since parents were selected by school administrators, their role advisory and functions vague, we might conclude, on the basis of Cibulka's (1974A) criteria, that the effort provided parents with a low degree of power.

Nevertheless, the Goals meetings did provide the school board and administration with considerable information on constituents' concerns and there were attempts to respond. These efforts, however, were perceived by reform-oriented parents as

representing "traditional" interests (emphasis on basic skills, vocational training and the needs of "slow" learners). Reformers charged that the teaching program was "rigid" and already too traditional. Members of this faction who became active in the PTA's and the League of Women Voters were the primary movers of a successful effort to unseat the trustees perceived as educational "conservatives" who then dominated the board.

Participation entered the second phase when most parent activists, regardless of whether they opted for innovation or accountability, became disenchanted with the Goals Committee (which endured for three years). In part this was due to the fact that the response to the latter involved long rangeissues whose impact could not be immediately perceived (i.e. a Right to Read program which mandated that teachers spend an additional 110 minutes a week to improve reading instruction for small groups of students.).

After 1971 and continuing to the present, most parent reform efforts have been expressed through two types of private meetings between parent groups and the school board. The first, representing delegations with diffuse complaints about the program, were typically one-shot events in which parents aired a variety of issues and were unable to formulate or develop consensus on a specific goal. They served primarily an affective "steam-venting" function.

The second type, represented organized requests for a specific goal. Through their participation in the Educational Goals meetings, increased interaction at the local schools and informal communication channels, a few of the reformers were able to mobilize support for a specific program change. The development of an organized independent structure to pursue negotiations with the board followed the initial rejection of requests for change presented by either individuals or informal delegations. Board members did not claim, as did those studied by Lyke (1969) that the demands were irrelevant but that they could not interfere with the school program or support requests for specific programs -- the province of the superintendent.

Despite these claims, some groups were successful. Policy outcomes indicate that the highest response was in relation to the organized interests - most of which ...

reflected reforms generated by extra-local groups. These included: the Civil Rights movement (special treatment for black students), child development groups (programs for children with learning disabilities), the alternative education movement ("open" classrooms for one elementary school), the women's liberation movement (a lunch program in all the district's elementary schools) and the rise of white ethnics (demands for more responsiveness to the needs of Italian students). (Novak, 1971)

Although some of these interests emerged after the institution of Redesign they did not develop through this structure. Some, however, were eventually incorporated into a local school Redesign committee. Since the changes developed through Redesign were primarily administrator and teacher recommendations (which typically did not involve the curriculum) and parent-initiated reforms have relied on the formation of independent groups, we can conclude that this structure is not effective for the articulation of parent-initiated reforms or new interests.

Interviews with parents involved in each of the above mentioned issues reveal a similar pattern:* a) Individual requests for change at the local school level; rejection based on claim that no action can be based on "individual" complaints. b) Creation of a network of parents based on common interest. During this stage parents provide each other with mutual support and some seek information from extra-local organizations or authorities. Mothers with no previous training in child psychology and education began to read books or take college courses on these subjects. c) Expansion of the network through open discussion of issues. Although these issues were not usually pursued in open school meetings, raising the subject helped to recruit new members. d) Non-response of the superintendent or school board to requests for change. Rejection was typically based on claim that reform required additional resources not likely to be forthcoming from a community resistant to increased spending or that the change would antagonize school personnel or other parents. d) Consultation with educators who had implemented similar reforms in other school districts. f) Formation of an organized

* With the exception of the Italian issue which appears to have been instigated by outsiders.

group or committee to pursue the issue on a long range basis.

The importance of the extra-local support is greatest during the initial phase of the process when the issues were declared invalid and parents had to provide documentation to prove the validity of their cause. Initial response was usually low-- few or inadequate resources were committed to the new program or change. Significantly, commitment of the local school board has increased in relation to two issues which were endorsed by the New York State Education Department. In 1973 this agency published a policy statement on alternative education which strengthened the open classroom cause and in 1974 this agency adopted a policy on services for handicapped students (the category under which learning disabilities is included). The fact that the State legislature mandated that local districts provide appropriate programs for the handicapped and increased the per pupil allotment for students in this category should help to strengthen further efforts in this area. So far alternative education has not received legislative support.

As the results of this study indicate, it is extremely difficult for parents with new or unrepresented interests to utilize either the institutional or established community structures to articulate these interests. Because of the absence of independent structures designed to pursue educational issues, they are forced to create new structures. Furthermore, goal attainment usually involves conflict strategies. (Lyke, 1969, p. 156, also discusses the lack of community institutions to supplement formal ones. Cibulka, 1974B, reported a relationship between success and conflict.)

Efforts were focused on local adoption of reforms generated by extra-local groups and were strengthened when these extra-local groups were able to create official endorsement at the state level. The socialization of Eastport parents, and most likely all suburban parents, directs them to pursue action at the local level. Except for the parents of children with learning disabilities, few parents recognize the need to change state laws as a more efficient change strategy. Additionally, most parents lack the

required legislative expertise and financial resources to pursue actions beyond the local community.

Another problem is the amount of effort required of the Eastport parents to develop the skills to pursue their objectives. Contrary to stereotypes about participation in secondary associations (Sills, 1968), few Eastport parents have learned political and organizational skills through such membership. Even those who have political skills find them inappropriate in dealing with the school bureaucracy. These deficits are especially true of mothers who dominate educational affairs in Eastport. There are two reasons for this: the incentive for participation in most community oriented associations, even when they pursue instrumental goals, is primarily social (friendship and status). Secondly, the functions of most local groups are primarily integrative. Civic and service groups, the ones most involved in school issues, seek to support local institutions and avoid public controversy.

Few mothers, then, have the training to cope with the superior political skills of the resistant educational administrators and their position is further weakened by the fact that few have had experience in bureaucratic organizations (the rules of local schools are extremely complicated and since, in Eastport, not written down in one place, it takes parents a long time to learn them.) The successful groups usually include lawyers and organizational executives, but even they had admitted to incompetence in dealing with the educational bureaucracy.

The expertise was acquired from numerous personal encounters with local officials and the advice of sympathetic trustees. According to the latter, parents <u>have</u> to organize pressure groups in order for the board to force the administration to act. Without this power base, they are unable to influence other board members or the administration.

* * * * *

What seems clear from the Eastport experience is that when efforts were made by professionals to involve the community, they were not effective from the standpoint of parents because:

a) the institutional structures did not provide for parent-initiated reforms

b) most parents lacked the political capacity to take advantage of the institutional structures

Because of these deficiencies at the local community level, the significant groups were extra-local. The decentralization policy in New York City was based on the theory that decentralization was functioning in the suburbs and that it was the participation of parents that gave suburban schools their quality and effectiveness. If the same participatory model could be applied to New York City, the advocates reasoned, it could begin to turn the system around.

The Eastport study has shown that this concept was a myth. When the decentralization policy was enacted in New York City, the very same problems emerged in relation to community participation as were evident in the Eastport situation.

* * * * * *

THE NEW YORK CITY BILINGUAL ISSUE

Although school elections in New York City are separate from regular elections, as in Eastport, the election procedures and differential participation serve to enhance the representation on school boards of members of established neighborhood groups, political parties and the United Federation of Teachers.

In Eastport, <u>all</u> citizens have to register for school elections and this has the effect of reducing turnout of the non-school community in periods of relative stability. Voters registered in the regular elections in New York City are automatically eligible to vote in Community School Board elections. Thus, the burden of registration, because of their lower participation in general elections, falls on the disadvantaged inner city parents -- the very people decentralization was designed to serve. This problem is compounded by the complexity of Proportional Representation which few laymen comprehend.

The non-partisan nominating caucus, which has been identified as a mechanism to control school conflicts (Minar, 1966), has not been established in any New York City district and few appear to have resources to put together and promote a slate representative of public school parents.* It is therefore not surprising to find that most Community School Boards are dominated by representatives of white middle class established groups.

Even where change oriented parents have won school board elections, there is evidence that they encounter the same frustrations as Eastport trustees who have attempted to represent parent interests (Yates, 1973), and few reforms have been instituted. While some of the reports attribute the adoption of bilingual programs to local initiative, the events involved in this issue reflect federal rather than local parent initiative. In most districts, Puerto Rican parents who want bilingual programs would encounter the same problems as the reform oriented parents in Eastport, since the representatives of established ethnic and other community groups are not likely to reallocate scarce resources for the benefit of a new minority. Bilingual education is a particularly controversial issue since it is perceived by many New Yorkers as giving Puerto Ricans an advantage not provided for previous non-English speaking groups. Although Puerto Ricans are American citizens they tend to be regarded as immigrants. To those who consider the socialization of the immigrant to "mainstream" culture as a major function of the public schools, the goals of bilingual education -- the maintenance of the child's native language and culture -- are not legitimate.

The inability of Puerto Ricans to develop cohesive ethnic neighborhoods, characteristic of earlier immigrant groups, has been discussed by Fitzpatrick (1973). Because of their geographic dispersal throughout the City boroughs, Puerto Ricans have not been able to achieve representation proportionate to their total number in municipal

*There appears to be a need for more research on the functions of the non-partisan nominating caucus. Studies dealing with the caucus system have not utilized methods to determine how effectively this structure is in developing a representative system.

and other elections (Rosenberg and Beardon, 1973) and the same generalization applies to Community School Board elections.

With few exceptions, the implementation of bilingual programs in New York City reflects federal action and the activities of middle class professionals (including Puerto Rican educators) in independent city-wide organizations. Despite the increase throughout the 1960's in Puerto Rican and other non-English speaking school enrollments, the City system did not reallocate resources to provide special language programs to meet the size of this group. The exceptions are in areas where Puerto Ricans do comprise a majority, but most of the bilingual programs implemented in the City were supported by federal funds following enactment of the Federal Bilingual Act. This Act made it possible to circumvent the provisions of the New York State Education Law which prohibited instruction in any language except English, a major obstacle to the implementation of bilingual and other experimental language programs for non-English speaking students. When the federal bilingual funds arrived (in 1969), there were few administrators or licensed teachers with the training to implement the programs. Funds were provided by Title VII (ESEA) for the development of bilingual instructional materials and teaching methods, but by 1974 the results had been disseminated primarily among the Title VII educators.

More funds were made available for bilingual programs in 1973 with changes in Title I guidelines requiring that funds be earmarked for these programs. An investigation of services provided for children with English language difficulty (in 1973 and 1974) revealed the need for systematic procedures to assess student needs and improvements in program planning and implementation (Steinberg, 1974). Since local school districts do not currently have sufficient resources for these efforts, responsibility lies with the Central Board and the State Education Department. On a city-wide basis, the students with language difficulty (approximately 145,000) comprise a large group, but in many districts they are a tiny minority. Because of this it would probably be more efficient to centralize services for this group. In 1973 the Central Board did establish an Office of Bilingual Education but its relationship to the community school districts was described as "advisory."

Many of the issues in the bilingual problem are technical and at present beyond the ability of most parents at the local level. Although federally funded bilingual programs often include a component for local parent participation, the evidence from program evaluations which include such a component indicates that most were ineffective. Besides, they are not geared to promote parent participation in decision-making. Program descriptions are comparable to the Title I parent involvement programs analyzed by McLaughlin with an emphasis on promoting support for the existing program. If the program is appropriate for the students there is nothing wrong with these methods, but they are certainly questionable in view of the evidence indicating that the situation is often the opposite.

In addition, the schools have no machinery to reach the non-English speaking parents of children not enrolled in the special programs. While some schools have bilingual coordinators to supervise the programs, their activities are confined within the school and the bilingual component. Their responsibility does not appear to include the determination of the total number of students in need of a language program.

Whether or not the needs are met depends not only on the availability of funds but the responsiveness of local building principals. There are signs of such responsiveness in some schools, but there is also evidence that many programs did not conform to the description provided in the Title I proposals. Finally, where federal funds are inadequate to meet local needs, further gains require either additional funds or the reallocation of existing resources. Parent demands for such reallocation at the local school or school board level are likely to create conflict, and in some cases have done so, with established interests or to place the needs of Puerto Rican students in competition with black students and other minorities.

These problems have been raised to point up the fact that neither the intervention at the federal, state or citywide level is sufficient to meet the requirements for effective program adoption and implementation at the local community school level. The data on Eastport suggest that where these New York City districts are shared by a heterogeneous community it is extremely difficult for any minority interest to be represented

without both the organization of local parents and the intervention of extra-local groups.

The prospects for poor Puerto Rican parents to achieve results comparable to those achieved by Eastport reformers is unlikely given their low educational levels and multiple economic and social problems. According to Rogler (1973), collective action is difficult to develop among Puerto Ricans from the Island since it is not part of their previous experience and the "history of group failure" characteristic of their organizational efforts. Despite the fact that the Eastport parents did not initially have the skills to cope with the school bureaucracy, they were able to organize themselves and devote time to self-training. Also, they were led by parents with social influence. It is conceivable, however, that it is in the interests of Puerto Rican educators working in these communities to provide this training.

SUMMARY

Political decentralization of the New York City schools and decentralization experiments in other cities aimed to promote the participation of minority parents in educational decisions (Boyd and Seldin, 1974; Cibulka, 1974B, LaNoue and Smith, 1973; Zellman, 1974). However, these experiments were based on the erroneous assumptions about institutional participation in suburbia and untested hypotheses about participation in general. While institutional structures are capable of securing minority representation and from time to time have done so, this is not always the case with the public schools. When the institutional structures were closed to the Eastport parents they were able to utilize established community groups to mobilize support for broad based issues but not for the promotion of a minority cause which required the formation of an independent organization.

These indepdent groups pursued specific issues based on reforms generated by extra-local groups. Extra-local groups appear to perform four functions for local district parents: 1) information dissemination, 2) moral support, 3) legitimation of issues and 4) effect policy changes enabling local adoption or strengthening local programs when

already adopted.

Since most of the Community School Boards created by decentralization in New York City are dominated by representatives of the established community organizations, political parties and the UFT, the prospects for Puerto Rican and other minority representation appears doubtful under current electoral provisions, as well as the resentment which has developed among the established ethnic groups.

On the basis of evidence from Eastport's Redesign effort and results of decentralization experiments in other cities, it also seems unlikely that the educational interests of inner city minorities can be effectively pursued through government sponsored institutional participatory structures. All these studies suggest that administrators are resistant to parent influence and can hardly be expected to provide parents with the organizational and political skills required for effective participation. Helfgot (1974) suggests that government sponsored social change efforts "may be permitted to exist only as long as they remain ineffectual."

CONCLUSION

The specificity of many of the educational issues raised in Eastport and the bilingual and other issues in New York City reflect three major trends:

1) The growing acceptance of the concept of equal educational opportunity and the right of each child to receive educational services appropriate to his abilities and needs. The concept of compensatory education established the precedent for allocating public school resources based on [redacted] needs.

2) Social differentiation and specialization of functions at the community level and the need for coordinative structures between the local and "supercommunity" units -- and integrative structures within the community. (Warren, 1963, p. 62)

3) An increasingly "political approach to curriculum questions on the part of the general public." (Kirst and Walker, 1971, p. 507)

Analysis of the issues in Eastport and decentralized New York City districts suggests that in New York State institutional arrangements created for parent participation do not provide adequate structures to meet the demands implied by these trends. The Civil Rights Act and provision of funds for educational programs for the disadvantaged,

primarily intended for black students, has eroded the traditional criteria for allocating educational resources which had previously, in most schools, been based on ability groupings. These changes paved the way for demands for special programs to meet the needs of other groups. As Cibulka (1974B) pointed out, more and more parents are challenging the traditional universalitic criteria and expect the schools to develop programs to meet client needs.

The local school board provides no machinery to pursue these issues or to "institutionalise opposition to the status quo" (Kirst and Noster, 1969) and the ability of local parents to oppose existing policies through independent structures is limited. In Eastport success is related to the acquisition of both political skills and technical expertise as well as social influence.

Although the local school board is perceived by most citizens as a policy-making body responsible for allocating resources based on local needs, this function is limited by restrictions imposed by state education law, teacher contract arrangements and inadequate economic and technical resources. Few districts have the resources to develop systematic procedures to identify student needs or evaluate program outcomes. Consequently most school boards have no basis for determining student needs or reallocating resources to create more effective educational programs. In addition, most school board members lack the expertise to deal with these issues and they have no staff to gather information. Thus they are almost completely dependent on the administration for technical information. Even if local districts had the above resources, in many cases, program modification would require changes in state law or teacher contracts or both.

The lack of structures for articulating educational interests at the local community level requires the formation of new structures to pursue parent initiated reforms. However, few parents in either the inner city or suburbia have the skills to pursue these strategies which appear to serve primarily the parents whose children can be labelled

as having "special" educational needs. Thus we doubt that such strategies can effect reforms for the child who cannot be placed in a special category. Furthermore, these local parent organizations are unable to pursue action where reforms require modification of state laws or, as in New York City, the Central Board.

These trends and local deficits suggest the need to strengthen the existing extra-local educational interest groups that are capable of articulating citizen interests at the state level. Since most of these existing organizations are geared to promote special interests there may be a need for a new group to promote broad interests as well as to provide greater support for all parents at the local level.

It would appear that the data presented here indicate the need for reformers to direct attention not to the institutional arrangements for representation in educational systems but independent community based structures capable of creating representation. As Pitkin reminds us:

> "No institutional system can guarantee the essence, the substance of representation. . .The historically developed institutional forms, the culturally ingrained standards of conduct are what flesh out the abstract idea. . . Thus the development and improvement of representative institutions, the cultivation of persons capable of looking after the interests of others in a responsive manner, are essential if the fine vision that constitutes the idea of representation is to have any effect on our actual lives." (p. 239)

The development of independent local and extra-local community structures to articulate citizen interests may, in the long run, contribute not only to more effective citizen participation but more responsive representation at all levels of the educational enterprise.

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